Multilateral Initiative On Malaria (MIM)

MIM is an alliance of organizations and individuals concerned with malaria. It aims to maximize the impact of scientific research against malaria in Africa, through promoting capacity building and facilitating global collaboration and coordination.

Alliance Constituents

1. MIM Secretariat
2. MIM/TDR at WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases
3. MIMCom at National Library of Medicine (NLM)
4. MR4 (Malaria Research and Reference Reagent Resource Center) at American Type Culture Collection (ATCC)

Editorial

This MIM Newsletter, Issue 1 for May 2006, is a joint publication by the outgoing and current MIM Secretariats hosted respectively by the Stockholm University/Karolinska Institutet in Sweden for 2003-2005 and African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania for 2006-2010. The newsletter presents the activities undertaken and achievements made during that period 2003-2005. The contribution from the current Secretariat 2006-2010, shows that the MIM organizational structure will be consolidated to guide compliance to the overarching mission, vision and strategic objectives as summarized on the inside page of this Newsletter front cover. The MIM Secretariat Advisory Committee will oversee compliance to Secretariat specific objectives and activities that will be undertaken to consolidate the achievements made by the preceding Secretariats. The additional activities will be publication of the African Malaria Research and Control Forum promoting interaction between research and control operations, and facilitating the establishment of African health research networks of excellence through collaboration with the African Union.

The 4th MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference, 13 – 18 November 2005, provided a unique forum for scientific discourse to over 1 500 participants from all over the world, among whom were world-renowned expert malariologists. There were over 600 posters, 300 oral presentations through 32 parallel sessions and 23 symposia, 44 exhibitors of health devices and products, and over 70 international journalists who gave the Conference unprecedented media coverage. Several recommendations were made for follow up by researchers, policy research makers and development partners.
MIM TDR Task Force Meeting 8 – 10 March 2006, comprising international African and non-African scientists, reviewed 49 applications consisting of new proposals and renewal applications for grant awards for malaria research and capacity building in Africa. The meeting recommended 8 renewal requests and 9 new proposals to WHO TDR for funding for a combined amount of US$ 1 007 479. However, the meeting noted that there was lack of high quality research proposals on malaria molecular biology and social sciences.

The Malaria and Gender Workshop, 13 – 15 March 2006, was convened through collaboration between the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership Secretariat, Kvinnoforum, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), and MIM Secretariat, and was funded by SIDA. The workshop had 37 participants representing worldwide grassroots activists, NGOs, research and academia, multilateral agencies, malaria endemic countries, ministries of health, and the African Union. The workshop objectives were achieved including enhancing knowledge on gender issues perpetuating the African malaria burden, formation of the Global Gender and Malaria Network, and development of its action plan.

MR4 urges malaria researchers to register using forms from its website and catalogue to request for reagents and information on its training workshops. Available reagents include various strains of malaria parasite species Plasmodium falciparum, P vivax P knowlesi; P berghei and P yoelli; and plasmid vectors such as mosquito antibodies, hybridomas and other cell lines for simple and complex assays.

MIMCom has made remarkable achievements so far by providing Internet connectivity to 23 health research institutions in 15 African countries, access to literature capacity building for research data management and leadership to the Antimalarial Drug Resistance Network. The network comprising 5 health research centres monitors resistance to antimalarial drugs in Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Tanzania and Uganda. The research undertaken generates extensive data for evidence-based decision making for malaria control programmes in Africa.

Remarks by outgoing MIM secretariat 2003-2005 in stockholm, sweden
Andreas Heddini, MD, PhD

Moving MIM in new directions
The MIM Secretariat took over from the Secretariat 1999-2002 at Fogarty International Center (FIC) at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH). The outstanding work of this Secretariat team provided a good continuity point on which to build and established a malaria R&D network. The team closed the Secretariat tenure by organizing a MIM external evaluation whose recommendations are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: MIM External Review Recommendations September 2002
1. Refine and clarify MIM vision, goals and objectives for the next five years, and develop a strategic plan to fulfill them.
2. Enhance communication and coordination between MIM four component organizations.
3. Strengthen MIM organizational structure by creating an Advisory Board, increasing the Secretariat tenure, and planning for transferring the Secretariat responsibilities to African institutions.
4. Plan strategically to augment and secure MIM long-term resources and funding.

MIM Alliance Organization and Collaboration
The MIM alliance convened a meeting in March 2003 in Stockholm, where a Strategic Advisory Board was appointed, and a strategic plan conceived aiming at strengthening the links between the MIM Constitu-
ents (MIM TDR, MIMCom and MR4) by embarking on joint projects. These included adding new sites to the MIMCom network, working with MIM TDR to raise more funds for research grants and overall improving MIMCom and advocacy strategy.

Communication and advocacy became important areas of focus for the MIM Secretariat and this also led to closer collaboration with other R&D organizations such as the Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI), European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), Malaria Foundation International (MFI) and the Gates Malaria Partnership at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (GMP/LSHTM).

In March 2004 MIM, MMV, MVI at PATH and EDCTP jointly organized a meeting that brought together malaria scientists, representatives of funding agencies and several malaria R&D organizations. The overall objective of the meeting was to discuss the opportunities that would increase global support for malaria R&D through a coordinated effort. Thus the Malaria R&D Alliance was launched and a working group was formed to be convened by the Secretariat to refine the meeting outcomes and advance the agenda. The main accomplishment so far has been the Malaria R&D Funding study (www.malariaalliance.org).

During the last three years MIM has strengthened its interactions with the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership Secretariat. There has been intense collaboration between MIM and RBM Partnership Secretariats on advocacy and with RBM Forum V in the organization of the 4th MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference.

African Involvement in MIM
The process to move the coordinating body of the MIM to an African country for the coming five years was initiated early starting with an open call for applications from interested African institutions to submit applications. The voting procedure was equally transparent and built on the model successfully developed by the previous MIM Secretariat at Fogarty International Center. The vote in the spring of 2005 elected the African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET) to host the MIM Secretariat for the five-year period 2006 - 2010.

In order to increase the African ownership in MIM and to prepare well for the Secretariat transfer contacts were initiated with the African Union (AU). This led to a fruitful collaboration with the Commission for Social Affairs at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through this collaboration MIM will appoint an Expert in Infectious Diseases for secondment to the AU Commission for Social Affairs to facilitate advancement of the malaria problem, its ownership and health research capacity building on the relevant AU agenda.

Swedish MIM Secretariat Achievements
Thus, the key achievements of the Swedish MIM Secretariat during the period 2003-2005 can be summarized as:
1. Closer collaboration between MIM Constituents (MIM Secretariat, MR4, MIMCom and MIM TDR);
2. Improved MIM visibility and communication strategy;
3. Enhanced IT-infrastructure at 10 malaria research sites in Africa;
4. Increased interactions with global malaria organizations through which MIM Secretariat became convener of the Malaria R&D Alliance that conducted the study on current global funding for malaria R&D;
5. Increased collaboration with RBM Partnership on whose board MIM Secretariat has been representing research and academia;
6. Increased MIM collaboration with the EU Network of Excellence for Biology and Pathology of Malaria
Parasite (BioMalPar) that has strengthened the MIM TDR research grants;
7. Working with AU to advance malaria research on the political agenda of African countries and increase African ownership in MIM;
8. Convening the 4th MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon, leading to global media campaign on malaria; and

Acknowledgements
The malaria community is gratefully acknowledged for the trust and support given to us over the enjoyable past three years, and as we welcome the new team in Tanzania to the challenges ahead, we request that the same trust and support be extended to them.

Vision and plans of the current mim secretariat 2006 – 2010 in tanzania
Joas B Rugemalila, MD, PhD

Introduction
Unlike the other three MIM constituents, MIM Secretariat right from its inception has been hosted in rotation by elected institutions: Wellcome Trust (UK) 1997–1999, Fogarty International Center (USA) 2000–2002 and Stockholm University/Karolinska Institutet (Sweden) 2003-2005. For the first time an African institution, African Malaria Network Trust (AMANET) whose offices are in Tanzania, has been elected by the alliance and partners to host the Secretariat for the period 2006- 2010. The Secretariat new physical, postal and electronic addresses are shown elsewhere in this Newsletter. The new website www.mimalaria.org currently being upgraded will function alongside the old one for some time.

New Secretariat Staff
The names and photographs of the new staff are shown below. Except for the Secretariat Coordinator, all other staff will be shared with AMANET.

MIM Mission and Vision
The Secretariat 2006-2010 is obliged to subscribe to the MIM collective:
1. Mission of maximizing scientific research on the malaria burden in endemic African countries;
2. Vision of having endemic communities and their development partners
   i. Attain enhanced recognition and ownership of the malaria burden, and
   ii. Endemic communities equitably participating in priority R&D generating effective control interventions.

Secretariat Specific Objectives
The new Secretariat will continue pursuing the constituent specific objectives and consolidating the achievements of the previous Secretariats. Furthermore, the Secretariat will also pursue the constituent specific objectives considered to be inadequately addressed. The MIM Secretariat specific objectives with regard to the malaria problem have been defined as:

1. Raising international public awareness;
2. Promoting global communication and cooperation;
3. Development of sustainable research capacity in Africa; and
4. Ensuring that research findings are applicable.

In pursuing the above objectives, the Secretariat will therefore undertake advocacy, coordination, fund raising, health research capacity strengthening and translation of research results into guidelines for policy and operations.

Planned Activities
Advocacy will be undertaken to raise international public awareness and ownership of the malaria burden and its status on the relevant agenda, promote
identification and prioritization of malaria R&D questions, mobilization of R&D funding commensurate with the burden, dissemination and utilization of R&D findings. The activities will include continuation of the publication of the MIM News and Opportunities, Newsletter, and Brochure.

The new advocacy activities will be:
1. Publication of the African Malaria Research and Control Forum to promote dissemination and translation of research findings into malaria prevention and control; and
2. Deployment of goodwill malaria ambassadors to raise international public awareness of the malaria problem, especially that of their peers.

Communication and coordination within the Secretariat, between the alliance constituents and between the alliance and other stakeholders in the malaria problem will be promoted through consolidating the:
1. Above publications;
2. Secretariat and overarching alliance governance teleconferences and meetings; and
3. Pan-African Malaria Conferences.

Fund raising will be undertaken for:
1. Establishing the Secretariat and its operational costs;
2. Strengthening malaria R&D capacity through collaborative training workshops;
3. Establishment of African R&D networks of excellence as a new activity including
   i. Secondment of an Infectious Diseases Expert to the African Union
   ii. Needs assessment of African R&D institutions,
   iii. Providing exposure to potential African scientists to research culture and ongoing R&D, and
   iv. Elevating the professional profile of health research; and

Acknowledgements
The Secretariat 2006-2010 sincerely thanks Sida-SAREC for facilitating the outgoing MIM Secretariat at the Stockholm University and Karolinska Institutet, to provide invaluable guidance, material and financial support during the transient period. Special inputs have been received through individual discussions with Ms Anna-Leena Jarva, Dr Andreas Heddini, Prof Mats Wahlgren and Prof Lars L Gustafsson.

Secretariat, from the left:
Prof Joas B Rugemalila, Coordinator
Dr Charles L Wanga, Communications Officer
Mr Badru B Amri, Finance & Administration Manager
Mr Saad W Ramadhan, Information Technology Officer
Mrs Saada N Mandawa, Secretary
MIM TDR task force meeting, 8 – 10 march 2006, Nairobi, Kenya

Dr Olumide A T Ogundahunsi

MIM TDR Task Force
The Task Force comprises eminent African and non-African scientists engaged in basic and/or applied research. MIM TDR Task Force assists the WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) to review applications for research grants to facilitate African scientists undertake research relevant to the control of the malaria burden in Africa. The review meetings are held annually in March and traditionally in Africa.

Opening Session
The meeting opening session was addresses by the country WHO Representative. The opening speech by the Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health, Kenya, acknowledged the WHO/TDR efforts in promoting human resource development not merely as an instrument for research capacity building, but also generating knowledge relevant for enhanced malaria control in Africa.

Meeting Deliberations and Observations
The meeting reviewed a total of 49 proposals and reports (8 final reports; 2 interim reports; 11 progress reports; 10 renewal requests; 18 new proposals) from 17 African countries. Eight (8) renewal requests and nine (9) new proposals were recommended for funding. The total budget for the recommended projects is $1,007,479. The value of WHO/GMP and WHO-AFRO participation in the previous meetings was noted and commended. However, the meeting also noted that there was an unfortunate lack of high quality malaria research in the areas of molecular biology and social sciences. The next meeting will take place 26 - 30 March 2007, and will include a two-day meeting of investigators.
Malaria and gender workshop 13 – 15 March 2006, Arusha, Tanzania
Joas B Rugemalila MD, PhD and Charles L Wanga DDS

Joint Convenors
The workshop was convened jointly by the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership Secretariat, Kvinnoforum, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), and MIM Secretariat, and funded by SIDA. There were 37 participants from all over the world representing grassroots activists, NGOs, research and academia, multilateral agencies, endemic countries, ministries of health, and the African Union.

Related Preceding Meetings
1. Gender and malaria held in Paris, 5-6 October 2005 reaching a consensus that a gender perspective needs to be integrated into all aspects of malaria control, and that joint advocacy by malaria and gender groups would significantly enhance the global effort to fight malaria and reduce poverty.
2. Challenge to look at malaria from a gender perspective that was presented at the 4th MIM Pan-African Malaria Conference, 13 – 18 November, Yaoundé, Cameroon

Workshop Objectives
1. Begin to build a global network on gender and malaria;
2. Develop a global plan of action to advance advocacy and knowledge about malaria and gender; and
3. Contribute to a resource book which will detail existing knowledge, experience and organizations working in the field of malaria and gender

Organization of the workshop
1. Day 1: Enhancing understanding and sharing of experiences on malaria gender issues;
2. Day 2: Identification of required actions and their prioritization; and
3. Day 3: Discussions and consensus on plan of action

Major Outcomes of the Workshop
The workshop generated the following:
1. Global Gender and Malaria Network to advocate for gender issues to be addressed by malaria R&D and control;
2. Plan of action for network incorporating:
   i. Statement on malaria and gender,
   ii. An advocacy strategy for the Network, and
   iii. Recommendations for policymakers, researchers and programming staff,
3. Contributions to the
   i. Malaria and gender resource book to be published in June 2006, and
   ii. WHO Gender and Malaria Information Sheet.
MR4, a resource for all malaria scientists

Timothy T Stedman, MR4 - American Type Culture Collection, 10801 University Blvd, Manassas, VA 20110

From parasite stocks to mosquito eggs, the goal of the Malaria Research and Reference Reagent Resource Center (MR4) is to provide bench, field, and clinical researchers with the tools necessary to combat malaria. Through funding by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the MR4 biorepository is here to provide, free of production cost, standardized and authenticated reagents to scientists worldwide. MR4 is based at the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) in Manassas, Virginia, with a subcontract to the CDC Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia for production of mosquito vector reagents.

MR4 also provides protocols, links and information on its website, www.malaria.mr4.org, and supports workshops for training of international researchers on a variety of topics from bioinformatics to Good Laboratory Practices. We strongly encourage all members of the malaria scientific community; especially researchers based in Africa and malaria endemic regions, to take advantage of this important resource. Registration forms enabling laboratories to request materials and information are available on our website and in the MR4 catalogue.

All malaria community researchers are requested to provide input into the resource and training needs of their specific local groups.
A call for reagents

Timothy T Stedman

Beginning in 2006, MR4 is making a concerted effort to boost our reagent catalogue with Plasmodium falciparum, P. vivax and P. knowlesi from geographically diverse regions, emphasizing both type strains and previously uncultured isolates. We continue to expand our offering of rodent malaria reagents including P. berghei and P. yoelii strains and plasmid vectors. We are working to enhance our catalogue of parasite and mosquito antibodies, hybridomas and other cell lines and to offer molecular tools for both simple (genomic DNAs) and more complex assays (microarrays, sequenced expression libraries). We encourage all malaria researchers to deposit with MR4 their most important Plasmodium spp. and Anopheline vector reagents in order to aid distribution to registered investigators worldwide. Your reagent donations help publicize your work, preserve intellectual property rights and ease the burden of fulfilling reagent requests and acquiring transportation permits, while providing a conduit for long-term storage of important reagent stocks. All depositors with MR4 receive recognition for their contributions, and recipients of MR4 reagents are instructed to appropriately reference both the depositor and the MR4 program in all publications and presentations resulting from use of the reagents. For further information, forms and requests, please see our website, email our tech support box at malaria@atcc.org or phone 703-365-2765. CD and bound catalogue and protocol books are also available.

MIMCOM at the Fourth MIM Pan-African malaria conference and RBM forum 5, 13-20 November 2005, Yaounde, Cameroon

Ingeborg van Schayk and Julia Royall

Hundreds of participants visited the MIMCom exhibition booth at the conference. MIMCom activities, featuring the MIMCom Malaria News Update and its subscriber profile, were presented to passers by through a poster and personal interaction. New subscribers to the MIMCom News Update had the opportunity to participate in a raffle, courtesy of The Lancet. Over 400 people subscribed to the MIMCom Newsletter at the conference. Dr Aduragbenro Adedapo from Nigeria was the lucky winner in the raffle and now has a 1-year free subscription to The Lancet. Conversations with subscribers confirmed that the newsletter is highly appreciated and makes an important contribution to the dissemination of malaria-information among the scientific malaria community. More information about the MIMCom network can be found at the MIMCom website, www.nlm.nih.gov/mimcom. The website comprises links to Medline, a variety of free on-line journals, databases, malaria-related sites, and general information. An NLM reference librarian serves as the Webmaster and is expanding the site to include special news releases and articles of interest to researchers.
MIMCOM: gateway to the world of malaria research

*Ingeborg van Schayk, MIMCom Communications Coordinator, Editor MIMCom Malaria News Update
Julia Royall, Project Director, MIMCom; Chief, International Programs, National Library of Medicine*

The Multilateral Initiative on Malaria Communications Network (MIMCom) is the first electronic malaria research network in the world to support health researchers in Africa with telecommunications, access to medical literature, and innovative tools for research and training. Initiated and led by the National Library of Medicine in the US since 1997, MIMCom has enabled full access to the Internet and scientific information at 23 sites in 13 countries.

The mandate for increased capacity and access came directly from African researchers, and MIMCom has facilitated their connections with one another and sources of information through the Internet and the World Wide Web. Researchers have reported creating new collaborations and partnerships as well as being able to function more visibly within the international research community.

Internet Connectivity for Health Research Centres in Africa

From 1998 to 2003, MIMCom connected 18 research centres in Africa in the following countries: Kenya (5), Tanzania (3), Ghana (2), Malawi (1), Uganda (2), Gabon (1), Burkina Faso (1), Cameroon (1), Nigeria (1), and Mali (1). MIMCom partners included AfriConnect and Redwing Satellite Solutions as well as over 30 institutions and agencies in the US, UK, Europe, and Africa.

Initially, NLM provided technical support and training to all MIMCom assisted research centres. After a period of monitoring and evaluation, all centres have become autonomous and self-sustaining in terms of technical maintenance, equipment, and operations.

From 2004-2005 MIMCom provided enhanced connectivity at research centres in Mozambique (1), Nigeria (1), Zambia (1), Uganda (1), and Congo Brazzaville (1). These installations were supported by SIDA with implementation by KTH in Stockholm where the MIM Secretariat was located 2003-2005.

**Strengthening African Leadership**

SIDA also supported MIMCom in the strengthening of African leadership. Tom Oluoch, IT expert from Kenya and former ICT Manager at KEMRI-Wellcome Trust in Kilifi, Kenya, and currently in CDC’s informatics office in Nairobi, conducted the site visits to make installation recommendations. Chris Olola, database management expert and data manager for the Severe Malaria in African Children Network (SMAC) is providing advice to the Antimalarial Drug Resistance Network described below. Through NLM, MIMCom continues to support these research centres and many health research scientists with access to information and literature and with capacity building for African leadership and specific research agendas.

**Access to Information and Health Literature**

During Phase I, NLM and the Medical Library of Zimbabwe (UZML) provided document delivery service for malaria researchers under a MIMCom pilot project. Researchers at MIMCom centres were able to order scientific publications electronically free of charge. This successful project was phased out with the advent of WHO’s the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI). HINARI has made possible free or reduced cost access to more than 3,000 biomedical and health journals for institutions in developing countries.
MIMCOM malaria news update
Ingeborg van Schayk and Julia Royall

Introduction
Every week, MIMCom reaches over 1,500 malariologists in more than 66 countries around the world through a free high quality electronic newsletter supported by NLM. The MIMCom Malaria News Update, first published in October 2005, provides a broad spectrum of relevant information for subscribers and their constituencies and serves as an effective communication medium for the entire malaria research community. To subscribe to the free MIMCom Malaria News Update, contact inga@aon.at.

Strengthening African Leadership and Specific Research Agendas
In 2003, NLM, in collaboration with MIM-TDR, sponsored a workshop for the principal investigators and data managers of the Antimalarial Drug Resistance Network (ADRN). The objective of the workshop was to share technical tools for carrying out ADRN’s research agenda: to gain a better understanding of drug resistance in malaria and to establish enhanced protocols for the provision of local data to support decision making in malaria control in Africa. They have designed their network, comprising 5 African health research centres in Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Tanzania, and Uganda, to conduct multi-center research activities using common standardized protocols. The intent of these researchers is to share raw data via a secure server and data summaries using a website.

As part of this process, the principal investigators developed and agreed to a memorandum of understanding covering the collaboration, including data sharing, security of the database, publication of research data, and development of a website. They designed a web site for the network comprising a publicly accessible section and one that is password protected. The latter, accessible to network investigators and funding partners exclusively, contains a summary of the activities at each site. Responsibilities for developing the pages on the site were divided up among the investigators attending the workshop. The researchers also agreed to use a secure file transfer protocol (SFTP) server to which they would upload their raw data on a regular basis. This arrangement gives them access to their own data and to view that of other ADRN sites. A network manager (Dr Wilfred Mbacham) has full access to all the data. TDR agreed to host a list server to facilitate communication and discussions within the network. NLM was asked and agreed to host the website as well as the SFTP server. The website and the SFTP server were operational by 2003.

To commence appropriate and effective data management activities, Mr Lanre Bello from Nigeria was contracted to develop and test a relational database management system (DBMS). The system prototype was tested in Bamako, Mali in 2004. With support from SIDA and NLM, Mr Christopher Olola from Kenya has joined the team as a technical advisor on clinical data management. Currently, the ADRN’s network coordinator Dr Wilfred Mbacham from Cameroon, the MIM-TDR task force manager Dr Olumide Ogundahunsi, and Mr Bello are working on the logistics for the system re-testing and implementation at all five ADRN sites.
Upcoming meetings, conferences and workshops

1. 16th European Congress on Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID)  
   April 1-4, 2006. Nice, France  
   (http://www.akm.ch/eccmid2006/)

2. Ethics Issues in Medical Research in the Developing World (Fondation Mérieux)  
   April 18-20, 2006. Annecy, France (www.fondation-merieux.org/conferences_n_training/)

3. 9th Annual Conference on Vaccine Research (NFID)  
   May 8-10, 2006. Baltimore, MD, USA  
   (www.nfid.org/conferences/vaccine06/)

4. World Health Assembly (WHO)  

5. 12th International Conference on Infectious Diseases (ICID)  
   June 15-18, 2006. Lisbon, Portugal  
   (www.isid.org/12th_icid/)

6. 11th International Congress of Parasitology (ICOPA XI)  
   August 6-11, 2006. Glasgow, Scotland  
   (www.icopaxi.org/)

5TH MIM PAN-AFRICAN MALARIA CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 2008
MIM Secretariat has the pleasure of making the first announcement for the above conference. Application guidelines will soon be published for African institutions interested in hosting the conference.
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